

KC-135 leads formation of F-15, F-16s, and British GR4  
Tornados supporting Operation *Iraqi Freedom*



U.S. Air Force (Suzanne M. Jenkins)

# **Integration of Coalition Forces into the USCENTCOM Mission**

*By JOHN F. COUTURE*

The United States and its coalition partners commenced combat operations in the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility in October 2001 with the launch of Operation *Enduring Freedom*. Today, well into the seventh year of operations, over 180,000 U.S. and 39,000 coalition troops from 68 nations remain engaged in security and stability operations as participants in Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Training Mission–Iraq (NTM-I) in Iraq,

Operation *Enduring Freedom*, the NATO-led International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, and the Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) in Djibouti. This multinational contingent is the primary instrument USCENTCOM uses to carry out its stated mission of working with national and international partners to promote development and cooperation among nations, respond to crises, and deter or defeat

state and transnational aggression in order to establish regional security and stability.

American multinational military operations go as far back as the Revolutionary War. It can be argued that the American coalition with France during the revolution may have been the deciding factor for victory when France prevented Lord Cornwallis from escaping by sea while American land forces surrounded his army at Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781.

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Since that event, the United States has fought within a multinational context in nearly every major conflict in which it has been involved. Alliances and coalitions, and their advantages and disadvantages, are part of U.S. operations now and will be in the future. Since 2001, USCENTCOM has relied heavily on coalition partners for prosecution of the war on terror, and this support is paramount to the command's success as it continues to execute multiple operations within its area of responsibility (AOR).

Since the outset of Operation *Enduring Freedom*, the responsibility of integrating the coalition with U.S. forces has rested with the USCENTCOM Coalition Coordination Center (CCC) located at command Headquarters in Tampa, Florida. The CCC supports the strategic objectives of the commander by coordinating the identification, development, and movement of coalition resources necessary to satisfy force capability requirements within the command's AOR.

This article provides a brief history of the CCC, introduces the processes and myriad organizations involved in sustaining the coalition, identifies recent coalition integration examples, and makes recommendations to improve the management of coalition issues.

## CCC History

Following Operations *Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm* in 1991, planners recognized the need to establish an organization capable of supporting and integrating coalition nations into the planning and operations process and of serving as the focal point for all issues related to the coalition. The USCENTCOM CCJ5 (Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate) conceived and planned this organization, and implemented these plans following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. By mid-October 2001, the Coalition Coordination Cell was established with a staff of four U.S. personnel, and it was soon designated a center as it expanded in size and responsibility. To accommodate the coalition liaison teams arriving in Tampa, USCENTCOM erected Coalition Village in a parking lot outside of the main Headquarters. Shortly before Operation *Iraqi*

*Freedom* began, a separate organization, the Iraqi CCC (IC<sup>3</sup>), was created, which supported coalition liaison teams that were sent to Tampa by nations planning operations in Iraq.

In January 2003, the Friendly Forces Coordination Center (F<sup>2</sup>C<sup>2</sup>), created to serve as the forward headquarters for coalition-related issues, deployed with USCENTCOM's main body to Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar, to begin operations out of the contingency forward headquarters (CFH). The F<sup>2</sup>C<sup>2</sup> functioned primarily as the IC<sup>3</sup> forward headquarters, while the IC<sup>3</sup> remained in Tampa to perform the rear headquarters function. The CCC continued to operate out of Coalition Village in Tampa to focus on *Enduring Freedom*.

In May 2003, USCENTCOM's command and control function, as well as the main body, shifted back to Tampa from the CFH. The F<sup>2</sup>C<sup>2</sup> followed suit by returning to Tampa in June 2003, where it merged back into the IC<sup>3</sup>. The CCC (*Enduring Freedom* focus) and IC<sup>3</sup> (*Iraqi Freedom* focus) operated as separate organizations until January 2004, when they combined to become a single CCC.

This single organization remains intact today. Supporting approximately 180 coalition personnel from 63 nations represented in Tampa, the CCC operates as the primary coordination office between USCENTCOM and coalition militaries. The center is also the conduit for information exchange regarding the coalition between Washington (including the Office of the Secretary of Defense [OSD], Joint Staff, and Department of State) and the AOR. Communications run the gamut from strategic to tactical, with the primary objective of ensuring that coalition forces are

prepared to perform their assigned missions upon arrival in the USCENTCOM theater of operations.

There are currently 42 U.S. personnel from all Services assigned to the CCC. Originally conceived as a temporary organization, the CCC is staffed entirely by Active and Reserve Component personnel assigned to

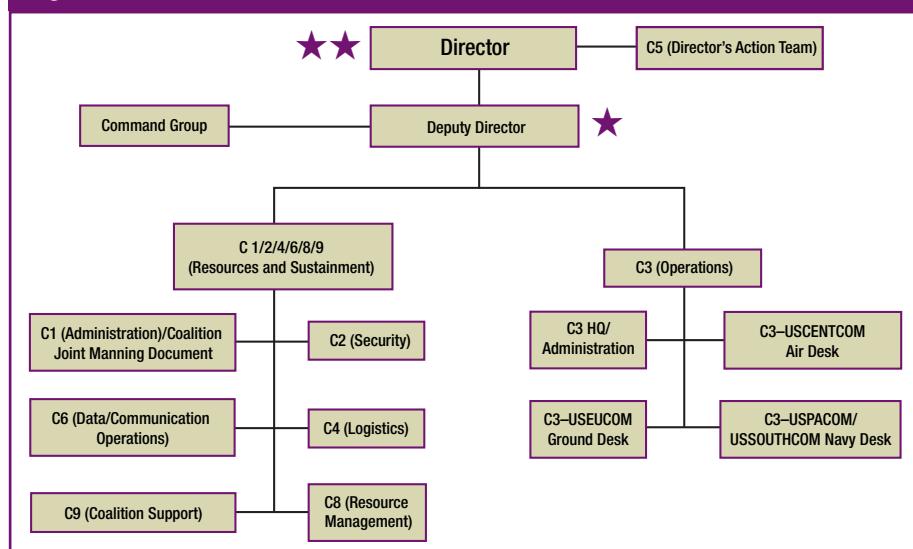
*the CCC operates as the primary coordination office between USCENTCOM and coalition militaries*

USCENTCOM on Individual Augmentee orders for periods of 4 to 6 months for Active personnel, and from 6 to 12 months for Reserve personnel. The CCC organization chart is shown in figure 1.

## Sustaining the Coalition

One of the most intensely debated issues in our country today is the ongoing call for the return of our troops. Although there is no timeline for the withdrawal of forces from either Iraq or Afghanistan, it is likely that a substantial American troop presence will remain until security and stability are established in each country, and each government demonstrates the capability to maintain a stable environment for its population. A substantial long-term coalition troop presence is needed as well. While conditions on the ground continue to improve in Iraq and Afghanistan, achieving the desired endstate in each country will likely take many years. The force level requirements necessary to establish

**Figure 1. Coalition Coordination Center**



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the appropriate conditions are constantly evaluated by commanders on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, USCENTCOM Headquarters, the Joint Staff, and OSD and scrutinized by the political leadership in Washington.

The issues being debated in the United States are under equally intense deliberation in the governments and populaces of its coalition partners. Because of a variety of circumstances, including established laws, financial considerations, public opposition, domestic security concerns, and a reluctance to support U.S. policy objectives in the region, many countries are averse to contributing forces. These factors also influence the level of troop and equipment contributions these nations are willing to provide and the caveats they place on their troops, which dictate the missions the troops are authorized to perform. Before many nations can even consider a commitment of troops or equipment, the overwhelming majority of our partners require NATO involvement or the endorsement of the United Nations (UN) in the form of a UN Security Council Resolution. NATO involvement and/or the existence of a resolution impart international legitimacy to the ongoing operations and provide the political top-cover that coalition governments need to participate.

In view of these complications, the United States must continue to maintain a long-term view of requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan and to use a multilevel engagements approach to sustain coalition involve-

ment over the long haul. This multilevel approach requires representatives from the Department of Defense (DOD), OSD, the Joint Staff, USCENTCOM, and commanders in the field to speak with one voice when engaging coalition partners about sustaining or increasing their contributions.

### Developing Countries

It is also necessary for the United States to eliminate the financial barriers that would otherwise prevent many countries from participating in coalition operations. The term *developing country* describes partners that require U.S. funding to participate in ongoing operations and the war on terror. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency's fiscal year 2008 budget request states that DOD

*programs for supporting our coalition partners and building partner military capacity enable coalition partners to participate in U.S. operations and conduct counterterrorist operations when they otherwise lack the financial means to do so. Their participation reduces the stress on U.S. forces operating in the [war on terror].*

Funding these programs ensures the continued support of many important coalition partners and helps maximize participation by developing countries that perform missions that would otherwise have to be performed by U.S. personnel.

### Multilevel Engagements

The steps of the multilevel engagements process and the participants involved are shown in figures 2 and 3, respectively. As a general rule, consequential discussions with coalition partners regarding potential troop contributions begin with senior-level bilateral meetings involving representatives from the OSD-Policy (OSD-P), the resident U.S. Ambassador, and senior-level country representatives including the minister of defense (MOD), chief of defense (CHOD), and other government leaders. The bilateral meetings provide an ideal forum for the United States to formally request military force contributions. Participants evaluate the experience and readiness of the country's military forces, identify potential missions suited to their capabilities, and negotiate funding requirements, commitment durations (for example, two 6-month deployments), and the types of missions the country is willing to perform.

If the MODs/CHODs participating in the bilateral meetings indicate a willingness to contribute forces, the final decision to deploy troops customarily requires the consent/approval of their nation's legislative body (for example, parliament, assembly, house of representatives), which normally occurs within 2 to 4 months.

The CCC's role is analogous to that of U.S. military Service chiefs. Although it does not actually train, equip, and deploy the coalition forces, the CCC is responsible for

**U.S. and allied officers discuss force planning during joint exercise off coasts of Panama and Honduras**



U.S. Navy (Lofta Lewis)

*as a rule, consequential discussions with coalition partners regarding troop contributions begin with senior-level bilateral meetings*

coordinating with the organizations performing those missions. Upon notification of a country's interest in contributing forces, the CCC engages that country's senior national representative (SNR), the U.S. Defense Attaché (DATT) assigned to that nation, and the coalition operations offices of the operational commander to coordinate and facilitate the deployment of coalition troops. It is common for the CCC to provide the contributing nation, through the SNR or DATT, with information requested by his legislative body to support the decision to deploy forces.

Once the contributing government formally approves the deployment of forces,

formal military-to-military (mil-to-mil) discussions are conducted. The discussions are normally hosted by USCENTCOM or the contributing nation and attended by a small contingent from the theater command (Multi-National Force–Iraq [MNF–I] or Combined Joint Task Force–82), the DATT, the regional combatant command serving the contributing nation, and the CCC. By the conclusion of these discussions, the following details regarding the deployment of the coalition forces are usually finalized:

- mission
- caveats
- location
- relieve in place/transfer of authority dates
- equipment requirements
- training
- funding requirements
- transportation.

*one of the conditions of the increase dictated by the president of the contributing nation was that his troops be assigned a more aggressive mission in their own battlespace*

### Case Studies of Coalition Integration

Perfecting the integration process for coalition partners to operate with U.S. forces is a never-ending task. Considering that it is highly unlikely that the United States will ever go to war again without a coalition, the current tasks are well worth the work. The following examples demonstrate the realities of coalition warfare.

**Failure to Communicate.** An event in the fall of 2007 illustrates the need to keep coalition partners involved and informed when making decisions about forces. A coalition unit of 50 personnel was in the process of boarding an aircraft to begin a 6-month rotation when it was informed that deployment had been put on hold. The unit's government had ordered this delay after learning the mission and deployment location differed from the agreed mission and location. U.S. commanders on the ground made the decision based on operational requirements. When formulating their decision, they factored in that the adjustments did not increase the level of risk the coalition troops would

encounter. Following weeks of discussions with senior U.S. officials and assurances that the mission and deployment locations would not be altered, the contributing government agreed to send its forces. The unit eventually deployed 30 days after originally scheduled.

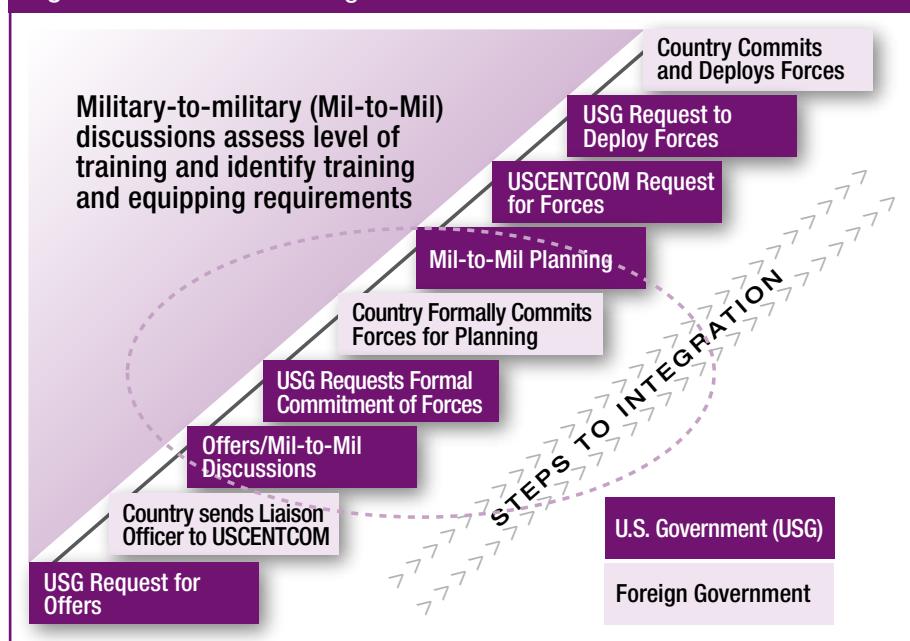
#### Multilevel Engagements Process.

Shortly after President George W. Bush announced the plan to surge additional forces into Iraq in 2007, one of our largest coalition partners agreed to more than double its troop contribution. Its forces had already been performing superbly in Iraq, and one

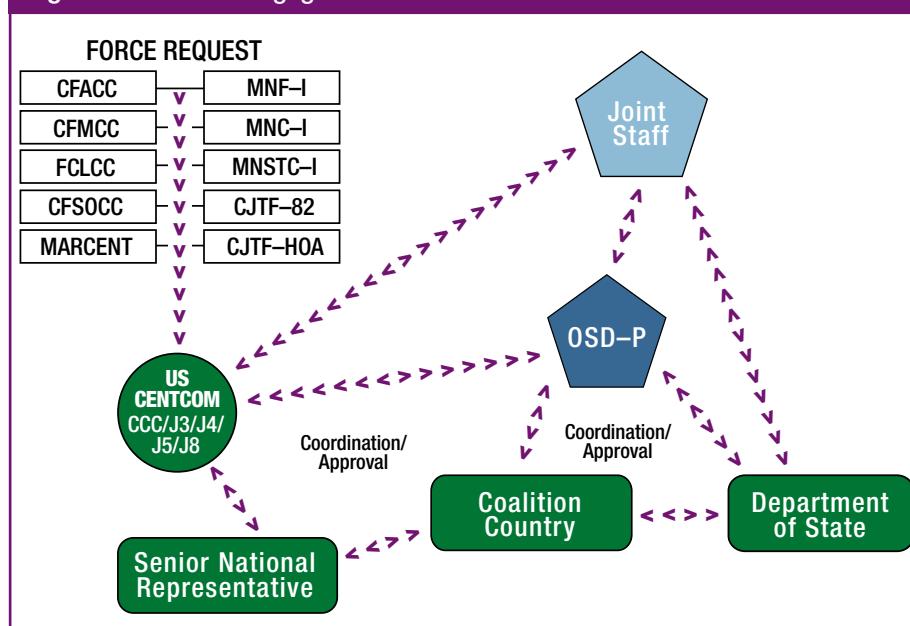
of the conditions of the increase dictated by the president of the contributing nation was that his troops be assigned a more aggressive mission in their own battlespace. A significant amount of coordination and engagement was necessary to make this possible.

After the country's intentions were announced, representatives from the contributing nation, the associated U.S. Office of Defense Cooperation and U.S. Embassy, the USCENTCOM CCC, MNF–I, and Multi-National Corps–Iraq (MNC–I) conducted mil-to-mil discussions to decide on a mission

**Figure 2. Coalition Initial Integration Process**



**Figure 3. Multilevel Engagement Efforts**



and battlespace location for the forces. Numerous courses of action were considered, and the participants eventually agreed that the coalition troops would be based near the border of a neighboring country and assigned the mission of deterring the flow of smuggled weapons into Iraq. At the time, U.S. and coalition forces were taking heavy casualties that were attributed to these smuggled weapons, and the mission was (and still is) considered critical to prevent the future loss of life. With the location and mission determined, the participants laid out the funding, equipment, training, and ammunition requirements to support the eventual deployment of the forces.

Over the next 6 months, the mil-to-mil participants, various coalition partners, and other organizations pulled together to make the deployment a reality. The all-important funding requirements were arranged and coordinated by OSD-P. The CCC brokered donations of weapons and equipment from three separate coalition partners. The Office of Defense Cooperation, which was intimately familiar with the readiness of the coalition forces, formulated the training requirements in conjunction with MNF-I. The deploying forces were trained in country by a mobile training team from U.S. European Command, and additional training was conducted by Task Force Gator when the forces arrived in Kuwait. MNC-I made major improvements to the camp where the additional troops would be housed and fed, and MNC-I also

constructed six smaller satellite camps to help interdict the arms flow and establish a firmer footprint in the battlespace.

The deployment was arranged by the CCC, USCENTCOM CCJ3 (Operations Directorate) and CCJ4 (Logistics and Security Assistance Directorate), and the U.S. Transportation Command. After their arrival, the troops were slowly spread out to the outlying camps. The original troops have rotated out and been replaced, and discussions to keep the forces through 2008, and possibly beyond, are ongoing.

#### ***Sustaining Coalition Relationships.***

The military experience and capabilities of most “developing country” coalition partners are not at the same level as their American counterparts. While it is understandable that operational commanders want and expect the most competent and experienced troops available to perform current missions, it is also essential for the United States to forge relationships with a focus toward future operations. The experience gained by developing nations in today’s conflicts will improve their troops’ professionalism, efficiency, and confidence, preparing them to fight in the conflicts of tomorrow. As operations in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, the countries’ value as coalition partners will increase as well. Their experience also improves their nations’ domestic security capabilities and creates coalition partners that the United States can depend on in future conflicts.

Building, sustaining, and improving the coalition are evolving processes. Having our partners involved in them is the most effective and lasting method to achieve buy-in and permanency. The Combined Planning Group (CPG) was one of the initial coalition-manned organizations created in USCENTCOM. A part of the J5 Directorate, the CPG consists of U.S., allied, and hand-selected coalition members tasked with advising the USCENTCOM commander with strategic- to operational-level plans and assessments, and political-military and civil-military analysis in support of Operation *Enduring Freedom*. A less formal entity that contributes to the USCENTCOM mission is the coalition-led working group. A current example deals with the ongoing effort to ensure the consistency and interoperability of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan.

Interoperability between the 25 PRTs in Afghanistan and ISAF forces is critical to their efficient operation. With 13 different nations in charge of PRTs, however, procedures, practices, and budgets vary, leading to less-than-optimal tactical-level actions in support of strategic lines of operation. To help alleviate this deficiency, coalition SNRs assigned to USCENTCOM developed a plan of attack. They set up lessons learned/best practice briefings by all countries leading PRTs in Afghanistan. After each lead country briefs the practices and procedures of its particular PRT, a working group made up of SNRs of

U.S. Navy (Alisha M. Frederick)



**President Bush thanks allies for their dedication during U.S. Central Command Coalition Conference at MacDill Air Force Base**



**Secretary Rice prepares to address multinational troops in Kandahar**

U.S. Navy (Steven Parks)

each lead PRT country determines best practices. Where differences in achieving interoperability exist, the working group decides the best way ahead and makes a recommendation. This evolution not only assesses multiple ways to get things done in a PRT and provide the best procedures across the spectrum but also ensures better coalition partner buy-in of the recommended procedures. Enabling partners to take on an issue, come up with a solution, and own the outcome strengthens the coalition while achieving the desired results.

In a March 2006 speech, former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated that while there are significant differences between the war on terror and the Cold War, there are enough similarities to provide useful lessons:

*Both required our nation to gird for a long, sustained struggle, punctuated by periods of military conflict. . . . Both require the use of all elements of national power to defeat the enemy. Both required a transition from arrangements that were successful in the previous war to arrangements that were much better suited for this new and different era. And above all, both required perseverance by the American people and by their leadership to be sure.*

Rumsfeld noted that there was no timeframe for when the war on terror might end, but that it could last "a good many years" and would require "patience and courage" to see through.<sup>1</sup>

With this long-term vision, the United States must continuously pursue the support of coalition partners to sustain the fight and explore methods that integrate the strengths of the partners' capabilities to fill the gaps within our military's operations.

In 2007, the RAND Arroyo Center published a report for the Army entitled *Building Partner Capabilities for Coalition Operations*, which states:

*Ongoing operations and emerging missions create competing demands for the Army's capabilities, resulting in requirement gaps that the Army is unable to fill by itself. Although there are other ways to fill capability gaps (e.g., with other Services, contractors, or increased Army end-strength), national and DOD strategic guidance emphasizes the need to leverage the capabilities of allies and partners to fill these gaps. As a supporting entity, it must use its limited security cooperation resources in a way that effectively builds partner army capabilities that support Joint requirements. To do this, the Army cannot work in isolation. Partnering with DOD and other U.S. government agencies provides the solution and also enables the development of partner capacity.<sup>2</sup>*

The reality today is that the United States embraces any and all countries willing to support the coalition, whether they are contributing a platoon or a brigade, one aircraft or a squadron, a single ship or multiple

vessels. Every mission accomplished by our coalition partners is one the United States will not need to perform. However, the Army's "capability gap" approach is effective and should be followed throughout the Department of Defense. A particular coalition partner agreeing to become an expert for a particular niche requirement for missions in future conflicts will pay off in the long run.

*the United States must continuously pursue the support of partners to sustain the fight and fill the gaps within our military's operations*

Integration of coalition forces to support the U.S. Central Command mission is resource intensive, at times tedious, but always enlightening. The full cooperation and close coordination of the entire military community are essential to coalition development and sustenance. Including coalition partners in planning and decisionmaking at the command by integrating the staff and keeping communication flowing both ways is the only way to ensure partner nation buy-in and the continued strength of this coalition or any other. Indeed, the war on terror demands the cooperation of all nations striving for stability and prosperity in the world. Strong, integrated, military coalitions will continue to play a large role in this effort. **JFQ**

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Al Pessin, "Rumsfeld Says War on Terror Takes Perseverance of Cold War," March 2, 2006, available at <[www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2006/03/mil-060302-voa08.htm](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2006/03/mil-060302-voa08.htm)>.

<sup>2</sup> See Jennifer D.P. Moroney et al., *Building Partner Capabilities for Coalition Operations*, RAND Arroyo Center Report (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007), xi-xii.